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AUTHOR Low, Lana
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ABSTRACT

This report focuses on changes in student expectations and institutional performance observed in student satisfaction data over a 4-year period (1994-1995 though 1997-1998). The Student Satisfaction Inventory was used to assess student perceptions of campus experiences at community, junior, and 4-year public and 4-year private institutions in North America. Data were collected from 423,003 students from 745 colleges and universities. Many interesting insights were found in this survey, including the fact that 2-year institutions are out-performing their 4-year counterparts in meeting student expectations. Four-year public and private colleges and universities are exhibiting performance in a "holding pattern," with the public institutions maintaining a slight edge over the private ones. Four-year private colleges, typically the most expensive, are losing ground in meeting student expectations. For all students, regardless of institutional type, there is concern about the quality of academic advising offered. Institutional responsiveness to diversity varied widely among institutions and for ethnic groups. For all students, basic personal needs, like safety and security, predominated, often offsetting concerns about more academic and institutional issues. In some instances, there appeared to be a mismatch between student and institutional values. For all institutional types, there were pockets of performance excellence and pockets of opportunity that colleges and universities need to examine. (SLD)

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USAGroup Foundation **New Agenda Series™**

February 2000

Are College Students Satisfied?

A National Analysis of Changing Expectations

by Lana Low, Vice President
Noel-Levitz, a USA Group company

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to share aggregate data about American college student satisfaction, and to help interpret changing student expectations and institutional responses.

ational data about college student satisfaction reveal several significant shifts in the ways students' expectations are changing and institutions are responding — or not responding — to those shifts.

In general, colleges and universities have altered the ways they provide programs and services to recruit and retain students, often in response to the "consumer sovereignty" which characterizes student-institutional relationships.

However, a four-year look at 423,003 students' attitudes measured at 745 colleges and universities reveals several interesting insights. Among the most significant:

- Two-year institutions are out-performing their four-year counterparts in meeting student expectations.
- Four-year public and private colleges and universities exhibit performance that appears to be in a "holding pattern," with the publics maintaining a slight edge over the privates.
- Four-year private colleges — typically the nation's most expensive — are losing ground in meeting student expectations.
- For all students — despite institutional type — there is a decided concern about the quality of academic advising offered.

- Institutional responsiveness to diversity varies widely among institutions, and for ethnic groups.
- For all students, basic personal needs — like safety and security — predominate, often offsetting concern about more academic and institutional issues.
- In some instances, there appears to be a mismatch between student and institutional values.
- For all institutions and institutional types, there are pockets of performance excellence and pockets of opportunity that colleges and universities need to examine.

Introduction

uccessful institutions share three basic attributes: they focus on the needs of their students; they continually improve the quality of the educational experience, and they use student satisfaction data to shape their future directions.

Student satisfaction studies measure how effectively campuses deliver what students expect, need, and want. These self-examinations enable institutions to measure their students' satisfaction with a wide range of college experiences. By taking "soundings" of student satisfaction, institutions are able to pinpoint their strengths as well as weaknesses.

Student satisfaction studies measure how effectively campuses deliver what students expect, need, and want.

Traditionally, colleges and universities have measured one dimension of student satisfaction only: institutional performance. However, for greatest impact and accuracy, *satisfaction* should be viewed within the context of student *expectations* (levels of importance). For example, the availability of parking and the quality of food service repeatedly surface as areas of high dissatisfaction to students across the country. But when asked to indicate the *importance* of these areas in their overall educational experience, students rate parking and food service relatively low. Thus, the interrelationship between importance and satisfaction is crucial to a fuller understanding of student perceptions.

This report focuses on the changes in student expectations and institutional performance observed in student satisfaction data over a four-year period (1994-95 through 1997-98). The Student Satisfaction Inventory™ was used to assess student perceptions of campus experiences at community, junior, and technical colleges, four-year public institutions, and four-year private institutions in North America. Any change in the data, no matter how large or small, is reported in the tables included in this report.

The Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)

he SSI measures students' satisfaction with a wide range of college experiences. Principles of consumer theory serve as the basis for the inventory's construction. Therefore, students are viewed as consumers who have a choice not only about *whether* to invest in education but also *where* to enroll. Students are seen as individuals with definite expectations about their campus experience. Satisfaction with college occurs when the expectation is met or exceeded by an institution.

A sample format of the SSI is included in the appendices. The 76 items for two-year institutions and 79 for four-year institutions are grouped statistically and conceptually into 12 key areas — the scales. Individual items and scale results are compared to national benchmarks for importance, satisfaction, and performance gap. The results are grouped by institutional type. The items and scales may be compared by 13 different demographic characteristics as well.

The SSI comes in three versions: one for four-year institutions; one for community, junior, and technical colleges, and another for career and private schools. (The career and private school results will be presented in a future report).

How does the SSI work?

Students rate each item in the inventory by the importance of the specific expectation as well as their satisfaction with how well that expectation is being met. The importance rating reflects the level of the student's expectation (the higher the score, the more important it is to a student and, therefore, the stronger the expectation). The satisfaction rating shows the degree to which the institution has met the expectation (the higher the score, the greater the satisfaction). Performance gap scores (importance rating minus satisfaction rating) are created and show how well institutions are meeting student expectations overall. Items with large performance gaps indicate areas on campus where students perceive that their expectations are not being adequately met.

Why do campuses use the SSI?

Assessing student expectations and levels of satisfaction provides institutions with the advantage they need to maintain their position in the academic marketplace. Likewise, students whose needs are actively addressed by their institution are more likely to be successful in achieving their educational goals and more likely to persist — and ultimately become the institutions' most dedicated alumni. Just as businesses are increasingly sampling customer satisfaction, so campuses are taking the measure of student satisfaction.

Who participates?

Institutions may choose to use the SSI with all or part of their student body, depending on the use(s) the institution intends to make of the results. The design of the sample and the selection of a sample size are determined by the institution.

When is it administered?

Use of the SSI is appropriate at any time during the academic year. However, if the intent is to use the results for institutional planning, it is best to survey students early in

Just as businesses are increasingly sampling customer satisfaction, so campuses are taking the measure of student satisfaction.

the term. Most campuses allow ample time for the entering students to become familiar with the campus before completing the inventory — usually three to four weeks. If the intent is to use the results to determine the impact of institutional interventions or changes, campuses are advised to survey in the spring — at least three to four weeks before the end of the term.

Where is it administered?

Most institutions administer the SSI during regular class meetings on campus. Other institutions administer the SSI during chapel or a free period on campus, in the residence halls, or in some instances by mail.

How many students are included in this study?

The student populations included in this four-year study are 113,807 from four-year publics; 183,398 from four-year privates; and 125,798 from two-year community, junior, and technical colleges, for a total of 423,003 nationally. Schools using the SSI are located in all regions of the country and represent the academic diversity of American postsecondary education.

A large performance gap on an item indicates that the institution is not meeting the expectation.

How are the data analyzed?

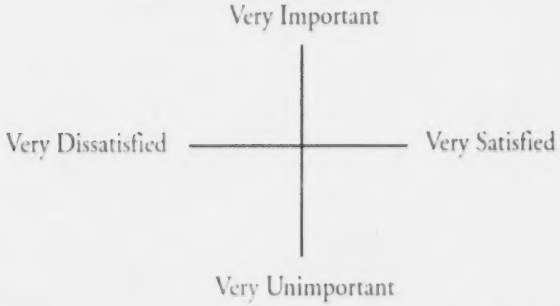
There are three scores for each item: importance, satisfaction, and performance gap, (which is calculated by subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score). A large performance gap on an item indicates that the institution is not meeting the expectation; a small gap indicates that the institution is close to meeting the expectation; and a negative gap indicates that the institution is exceeding students' expectations.

What do the results mean?

The matrix below provides a graphic conceptualization of how student expectations (importance) and satisfaction are considered together when pinpointing institutional strengths and opportunities for improvement.

- **High importance/low satisfaction** pinpoints areas that should claim the institution's immediate attention.
- **High importance/high satisfaction** showcases the institution's areas of strength that should be highlighted in promotional materials.
- **Low importance/low satisfaction** presents an opportunity for the institution to examine those areas that have low status with students.
- **Low importance/high satisfaction** suggests areas from which it might be beneficial to redirect institutional resource commitments to areas of higher importance.

Matrix for Prioritizing Action



The Scales

he SSI scales provide a generalized view of student satisfaction by grouping the items (76 for two-year version and 79 for four-year version) statistically and conceptually into 12 key areas, with an average of eight such items per scale. The composition of the scales varies slightly by institutional type, i.e., two-year and four-year. Table 1 delineates the variations in scales between the two-year and four-year institutions.

Table 1. SSI Scales

Community, Junior, & Technical Colleges	Four-Year Colleges and Universities
Academic Advising and Counseling	Academic Advising
Academic Services	Campus Climate
Admissions and Financial Aid	Campus Life
Campus Climate	Campus Support Services
Campus Support Services	Concern for the Individual
Concern for the Individual	Instructional Effectiveness
Instructional Effectiveness	Recruitment and Financial Aid
Registration Effectiveness	Registration Effectiveness
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations	Responsiveness to Diverse Populations
Safety and Security	Safety and Security
Service Excellence	Service Excellence
Student Centeredness	Student Centeredness

Table 1

Tables 2-4, on the following pages, highlight the aggregate level of change in student expectations and satisfaction from 1994-95 to 1997-98 across three institutional types, ordered by all 12 scales. Increases in importance and satisfaction scores across the four years are highlighted.

These tables highlight the changes in student expectations and student satisfaction in all scale areas for all institutional types over the four-year period. Expectations (importance ratings) increased in 11 areas at community, junior, and technical colleges, in 10 areas at four-year public colleges and universities, and in six areas at four-year private colleges and universities. The increase in *campus support services* and *registration effectiveness* represented the most notable change in expectations for two-year colleges and for four-year privates, while *campus life* reflected the greatest change for four-year public institutions.

Increases in student satisfaction were noted less frequently in the data, with six at the community, junior, and technical colleges, seven at the four-year publics and eight at the four-year privates. The greatest increases in satisfaction are observed in the area of *service excellence* for the two-year colleges, in the *academic advising* area for four-year publics, and in *safety and security* for four-year privates. Decreases in satisfaction occur in *academic advising* for the two-year colleges and the four-year privates, and in *responsiveness to diverse populations* at four-year publics.

Importance Ratings

1 - not important at all
2 - not very important
3 - somewhat unimportant
4 - neutral
5 - somewhat important
6 - important
7 - very important
0 - does not apply

Satisfaction Ratings

1 - not satisfied at all
2 - dissatisfied
3 - somewhat dissatisfied
4 - neutral
5 - somewhat satisfied
6 - satisfied
7 - very satisfied
0 - not available not used

Table 2. Changes in SSI Scales at Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges, 1994-1998

SCALE	1994-95	1997-98
Academic Advising/Counseling		
Importance	6.08	**6.11**
Satisfaction	5.10	5.06
Performance Gap	0.98	1.03
Academic Services		
Importance	5.99	**6.03**
Satisfaction	5.16	5.16
Performance Gap	0.83	0.87
Admissions and Financial Aid		
Importance	5.92	**5.96**
Satisfaction	4.94	4.93
Performance Gap	0.98	1.03
Campus Climate		
Importance	5.92	**5.94**
Satisfaction	5.12	**5.14**
Performance Gap	0.80	0.80
Campus Support Services		
Importance	5.31	**5.39**
Satisfaction	4.77	4.77
Performance Gap	0.54	0.62
Concern for the Individual		
Importance	6.07	**6.09**
Satisfaction	5.10	**5.11**
Performance Gap	0.97	0.98
Instructional Effectiveness		
Importance	6.17	**6.19**
Satisfaction	5.30	5.30
Performance Gap	0.87	0.89
Registration Effectiveness		
Importance	6.11	**6.14**
Satisfaction	5.27	**5.28**
Performance Gap	0.84	0.86
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations		
Importance	—	—
Satisfaction	5.34	5.33
Performance Gap	—	—
Safety and Security		
Importance	5.92	**5.99**
Satisfaction	4.77	**4.79**
Performance Gap	1.15	1.20
Service Excellence		
Importance	5.89	**5.92**
Satisfaction	5.06	**5.09**
Performance Gap	0.83	0.83
Student Centeredness		
Importance	5.91	**5.93**
Satisfaction	5.20	**5.21**
Performance Gap	0.71	0.72

Note: Students are asked to indicate level of satisfaction — not expectations — for Responsiveness to Diverse Populations.

Table 3. Changes in SSI Scales at Four-Year Public Institutions, 1994-1998

SCALE	1994-95	1997-98
Academic Advising		
Importance	6.30	**6.31**
Satisfaction	5.01	**5.09**
Performance Gap	1.29	1.22
Campus Climate		
Importance	6.03	**6.06**
Satisfaction	4.82	**4.87**
Performance Gap	1.21	1.19
Campus Life		
Importance	5.43	**5.60**
Satisfaction	4.66	**4.70**
Performance Gap	0.77	0.90
Campus Support Services		
Importance	6.02	**6.06**
Satisfaction	4.99	4.96
Performance Gap	1.03	1.10
Concern for the Individual		
Importance	6.03	**6.07**
Satisfaction	4.72	**4.76**
Performance Gap	1.31	1.31
Instructional Effectiveness		
Importance	6.30	**6.31**
Satisfaction	5.07	5.05
Performance Gap	1.23	1.26
Recruitment and Financial Aid		
Importance	5.97	**6.01**
Satisfaction	4.53	**4.57**
Performance Gap	1.44	1.44
Registration Effectiveness		
Importance	6.17	6.17
Satisfaction	4.76	4.74
Performance Gap	1.41	1.43
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations		
Importance	—	—
Satisfaction	5.01	4.86
Performance Gap	—	—
Safety and Security		
Importance	6.24	**6.26**
Satisfaction	4.37	4.33
Performance Gap	1.87	1.93
Service Excellence		
Importance	5.98	**6.00**
Satisfaction	4.68	**4.71**
Performance Gap	1.30	1.29
Student Centeredness		
Importance	6.00	**6.03**
Satisfaction	4.85	**4.91**
Performance Gap	1.15	1.12

Note: Students are asked to indicate level of satisfaction — not expectations — for Responsiveness to Diverse Populations.

Importance Ratings

1 - not important at all
2 - not very important
3 - somewhat unimportant
4 - neutral
5 - somewhat important
6 - important
7 - very important
0 - does not apply

Satisfaction Ratings

1 - not satisfied at all
2 - dissatisfied
3 - somewhat dissatisfied
4 - neutral
5 - somewhat satisfied
6 - satisfied
7 - very satisfied
0 - not available not used

Importance Ratings

1 - not important at all
2 - not very important
3 - somewhat unimportant
4 - neutral
5 - somewhat important
6 - important
7 - very important
0 - does not apply

Satisfaction Ratings

1 - not satisfied at all
2 - dissatisfied
3 - somewhat dissatisfied
4 - neutral
5 - somewhat satisfied
6 - satisfied
7 - very satisfied
0 - not available not used

Table 4. Changes in SSI Scales at Four-Year Private Institutions, 1994-1998

SCALE	1994-95	1997-98
Academic Advising		
Importance	6.30	6.29
Satisfaction	5.35	5.31
Performance Gap	0.95	0.98
Campus Climate		
Importance	6.17	6.17
Satisfaction	5.14	**5.19**
Performance Gap	1.03	0.98
Campus Life		
Importance	5.67	5.67
Satisfaction	4.70	**4.77**
Performance Gap	0.97	0.90
Campus Support Services		
Importance	5.99	**6.03**
Satisfaction	5.05	5.05
Performance Gap	0.94	0.98
Concern for the Individual		
Importance	6.15	**6.17**
Satisfaction	5.17	**5.18**
Performance Gap	0.98	1.03
Instructional Effectiveness		
Importance	6.34	**6.37**
Satisfaction	5.33	**5.35**
Performance Gap	1.01	1.02
Recruitment and Financial Aid		
Importance	6.11	**6.14**
Satisfaction	4.89	4.88
Performance Gap	1.22	1.26
Registration Effectiveness		
Importance	6.11	**6.15**
Satisfaction	4.99	4.98
Performance Gap	1.12	1.17
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations		
Importance	—	—
Satisfaction	4.96	**4.98**
Performance Gap	—	—
Safety and Security		
Importance	6.16	**6.18**
Satisfaction	4.61	**4.72**
Performance Gap	1.55	1.46
Service Excellence		
Importance	6.02	6.01
Satisfaction	4.99	**5.00**
Performance Gap	1.03	1.01
Student Centeredness		
Importance	6.19	6.18
Satisfaction	5.24	**5.28**
Performance Gap	0.95	0.90

Note: Students are asked to indicate level of satisfaction — not expectations — for Responsiveness to Diverse Populations.

Nationally Prominent Scales

mong the 12 scale areas, multi-campus analyses over the four years of data collection revealed that there were four scales of national prominence, thus the primary areas of focus for this study: 1) *academic advising*, 2) *admissions/recruitment and financial aid*, 3) *responsiveness to diverse populations*, and 4) *safety and security*. These four areas were selected for indepth analysis because they signaled areas of greatest variation in importance and satisfaction across both institutional type and the demographic characteristics of students. The items that constitute each of the four scales are presented in the appendices. The definitions of the SSI scales that correspond to these areas are as follows:

Academic Advising and Counseling assesses the comprehensiveness of the academic advising program. Academic advisors are evaluated on the basis of their knowledge, competence and personal concern for student success, as well as on their approachability.

Admissions/Recruitment and Financial Aid assesses the institution's ability to enroll students in an effective manner. This scale covers issues such as competence and knowledge of admissions counselors, as well as the effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs.

Responsiveness to Diverse Populations assesses the institution's commitment to specific groups of students enrolled at the institution, e.g., under-represented populations, students with disabilities, commuters, part-time students, and older, returning learners.

Safety and Security assesses the institution's responsiveness to students' personal safety and security on the campus. This scale measures the effectiveness of both security personnel and campus facilities.

These four areas signal great variation in importance and satisfaction across institutional type and student demographics.

Student Feedback

In addition to quantitative results, a qualitative dimension of the data is essential for enhanced understanding of the meaning behind the numbers. In order to provide this dimension, more than 50 sessions of student focus groups were conducted on all types of campuses during the four-year study. The findings from the SSI were thus examined in greater depth, and the results of the focus group discussions helped to fortify a fuller understanding of the underlying factors affecting student expectations and satisfaction. Recurring themes surfaced:

- **Cost.** The higher the cost for attending an institution, the greater the expectations of its students — whether the student is paying for tuition and other costs or the institution is paying through scholarships and other forms of financial aid.

- **Reputation.** The more selective the institution, the higher the expectations of its students — and the higher the levels of satisfaction. Selective institutions tend to know who they are; they have figured out what students want, need, and expect; and they have continued to receive positive feedback for their performance.

- **Value.** Students tend to value much of what the institution says it values. Thus, the greater the value articulated by the institution, the higher the expectations of its current and future students. For example, the institution with optional academic advising is likely to see low student expectations for advising because no one has told the student that working with an advisor can provide an academic edge.

An inability to deliver on promises made, especially those made during the recruitment process, results in inflated student expectations and lowered satisfaction.

- **Overpromising/Underdelivering.** An inability to deliver on promises made, especially those made during the recruitment process, results in inflated student expectations and lowered satisfaction. "Bait and switch" practices in financial aid and promises for admission to limited-access majors are two areas where overpromising occurs more often than it should and are reflected in student dissatisfaction in SSI scales that cover these areas.

- **Basic personal needs.** When basic personal needs are not acknowledged and addressed by the institution, students' expectations rise accordingly. Consider the issue of the amount of student parking on campus. Most students assign relatively low importance scores to the expectation because the issue is usually seen as one of convenience. If, however, students perceive student parking to be a safety and security issue on their campus, the expectations soar and the satisfaction drops. The issue is no longer one of convenience, but rather one of meeting a basic need for safety and feeling secure.

Student Expectations of College Life

Paradoxically, expectations reflect the values of both the student and the institution. The greater the value of the expectation for the student, the higher the expectation the student has for the institution. The greater the value of the expectation for the institution, the higher the expectation the institution has for the student.

Students rate the level of importance of statements of expectation by responding to the question "How important is it to you that your institution meet this expectation?" Responses reflect how strongly students feel about the statement, with higher scores reflecting greater student expectations.

Expectations reflect the values of both the student and the institution.

Importance scores that are consistently higher at four-year private institutions suggest that students have higher expectations for those campus experiences than do their counterparts at four-year public institutions or at community, junior, and technical colleges. These quantitative results have been corroborated by hundreds of students in focus groups across all institutional types.

Demographic Differences

Some general trends in importance scores are revealed by variations among the demographic characteristics of students. It is not likely, however, that one demographic characteristic alone accounts for the difference(s) in importance scores observed in the scales areas in tables 2-4 (pages 6-8).

- **Age.** Student expectations generally increase with age.
- **Gender.** Females have higher expectations than males across all institutional types.
- **Class level.** Freshmen and sophomores have higher expectations than juniors and seniors.
- **Class load.** Full-time students have higher expectations than part-time students.
- **Enrollment status.** Day students have higher expectations than evening and weekend students.
- **Ethnicity/Race.** African-American students have the highest expectations among all ethnic groups.
- **Residence.** In-state students have higher expectations than out-of-state students across all institutional types. International students at four-year private institutions have the highest expectations for their college experience.
- **Current residence.** Students living on campus have higher expectations than those living off campus.

- **Employment status.** Students employed part-time on campus have higher expectations than students employed part-time off campus, full-time off or on campus, or not employed.

- **Institutional choice.** Students for whom the institution is their first choice, rather than the second, third, or lower choices, have higher expectations for their college experience.

- **Educational goal.** For degree-seeking students at community, junior, and technical colleges, those seeking the associate's degree have higher expectations, while students seeking the doctorate/professional degree have higher expectations at both the four-year public and private institutions.

- **Grade point average.** Student expectations increase as the self-reported GPA increases.

- **Disabilities.** Students with no reported disabilities have higher expectations than those with disabilities.

Student Satisfaction with College Life

nstitutions are in a reciprocal relationship with students: When student expectations are met or exceeded by the institution, the result is higher satisfaction with the institution. Thus, when students experience success, so does the institution.

Students rate their level of satisfaction with statements of expectation by responding to the question "How satisfied are you that your institution has met this expectation?" Responses reflect the degree to which students feel their institution is meeting the expectation, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of student satisfaction.

Student responses by demographic characteristics vary considerably across institutional type. Students indicate that cost, reputation, value, overpromising/underdelivering, and basic needs influence their levels of satisfaction, as well as their expectations. These influences have been corroborated by hundreds of students in focus groups across all demographic groups.

When students experience success, so does the institution.

Some of the general trends regarding satisfaction scores by demographic characteristic across all institutional types are presented below. As is true with importance scores, it is not likely that one demographic characteristic alone would account for the difference(s) in satisfaction scores observed in tables 2-4 (pages 6-8).

- **Age.** Student satisfaction scores tend to increase with age.

- **Gender.** Females have higher levels of satisfaction than males across all institutional types.

- **Class level.** Freshmen and sophomores have higher levels of satisfaction than juniors and seniors.
- **Class load.** Part-time students have higher levels of satisfaction than full-time students.
- **Enrollment status.** Day students have higher levels of satisfaction than evening and weekend students.
- **Ethnicity/Race.** Caucasian students have higher levels of satisfaction than non-Caucasian students.
- **Residence.** In-state students at community, junior, and technical colleges have higher levels of satisfaction than out-of-state students, while results at the four-year institutions are mixed. International students experience higher levels of satisfaction at four-year private institutions.
- **Current residence.** Students living on campus are more satisfied than those living off campus.
- **Employment status.** Students employed part-time on campus have higher levels of satisfaction than students employed part-time off campus, full-time off or on campus, or not employed.
- **Institutional choice.** Students for whom the institution is their first choice, rather than second, third, or lower choices, experience higher levels of satisfaction.
- **Educational goal.** For degree-seeking students enrolled at community, junior and technical colleges, those ultimately seeking the bachelor's degree have the highest satisfaction, while students seeking the master's degree have higher levels of satisfaction at both the four-year public and private institutions.
- **Grade point average.** The higher the GPA the higher the level of student satisfaction.
- **Disabilities.** Students who report no disabilities have higher levels of satisfaction than those reporting disabilities.

It is not likely that one demographic characteristic alone would account for differences in satisfaction scores.

Patterns of Student Response

tudent expectations and student satisfaction findings are more compelling when considered in tandem. The Student Satisfaction Inventory trend data are examined in the context of both importance and satisfaction scores. Toward that end, five patterns of response emerge from the analysis of the data described below.

Increased Expectations / Increased Satisfaction

This pattern is deemed desirable by most institutions. One of the most predominant explanations of this response pattern is that students have gleaned value from specific institutional actions and respond positively with higher satisfaction scores.

An example of increased expectations/increased satisfaction occurred at a campus where a pattern of very high expectations and low satisfaction with computer access was indicated. The institution responded by upgrading all academic computer labs and providing 24-hour access at popular sites across campus. On the next survey students responded with even higher expectations for computer access, but this time the expectation was accompanied by higher satisfaction scores. The students indicated their approval with the institution's efforts, as well as their increased confidence in the institution's willingness to respond to their previously unmet needs.

Student expectations and student satisfaction findings are more compelling when considered in tandem.

Increased Expectations/Decreased Satisfaction

This pattern is indicative of a call to action by students who have been ignored repeatedly by the institution.

Consider the example of the suburban campus where there weren't enough parking spaces to accommodate the commuter population, particularly between mid morning and early afternoon. Student importance responses continued to warrant the institution's attention, even to the point that the safety and security scale surpassed both instructional effectiveness and academic advising effectiveness as the issue of greatest importance to the students. Unlike the previous example, this institution believed there was no resolution to this situation, so the expectations for parking continued to increase with satisfaction scores declining even further.

Decreased Expectations/Increased Satisfaction

This pattern may suggest that the institution has been responsive to students' calls to action regarding specific programs or services, resulting in lowered expectations for needs that have been addressed by the institution's response(s).

Consider the institution where adult students came directly to campus from their full-time jobs. At this institution, the dining hall was open for business for only those students on a meal plan. Adult students registered their protests with high expectations and low satisfaction ratings until the institution opened a snack bar with sandwiches and other food options for these students. The adult students responded positively to the institution's actions with decreased importance scores and increased satisfaction scores, bringing the expectation for availability of food closer to the level of the traditional students on campus. When the basic personal need was met, it was no longer a high priority for these adults. In this case, satisfaction scores also increased for students on the meal plan.

Decreased Expectations/Decreased Satisfaction

Student expectations may decrease because the institution has not shown that it is willing to act on the students' behalf. Likewise, expectations may decrease because the students' dependence on the institution changes. In either case, decreases in value for the students are not commensurate with higher levels of satisfaction.

An example of this pattern occurred at an institution where all freshmen indicating an interest in business were advised by faculty members whose primary goal was to ensure that these students received the guidance they needed to become full-fledged business majors by the end of the second term. Upon entry to the major, students who as freshmen had established high expectations for advising and had rated the institution's performance very high, now faced a situation where they shared one professional advisor and five peer advisors with 500 sophomore, junior, and senior business majors. Contact with this advisor consisted of a meeting once per term in a group of 30 students instead of the one-on-one advising with a concerned faculty member they had experienced previously. Needless to say, students indicated that this message from the business department was not consistent with their expectations. The earlier expectations and satisfaction levels diminished quickly with the new approach resulting in lowered expectations and decreased satisfaction ratings for the institution.

No Change

This pattern of response may be interpreted either positively or negatively by the institution. On the positive side, this pattern may occur when student expectations and institutional value remain intact or when institutional performance is consistent. On the negative side, students often perceive that an institution's lack of response to their requests continues to warrant low expectation or low satisfaction scores.

Students glean value from specific institutional actions and respond positively with higher satisfaction scores.

Focused Patterns of Response for Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges

Generalizations regarding the patterns of student responses by demographic subgroup are offered for the four areas of focus selected for this study: 1) *academic advising*, 2) *admissions and financial aid*, 3) *responsiveness to diverse populations*, and 4) *safety and security*. The information for these four-year changes is presented in table format in Appendix D.

Community, Junior and Technical Colleges

AGE

- Traditional-age students (up to 25 years) showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction for *academic advising, admissions and financial aid, responsiveness to diverse populations*, and *safety and security*.
- Students age 25-34 years exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *admissions and financial aid*. These students also showed decreased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations* and *academic advising*.
- Students age 35-44 years exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *academic advising*.
- Students age 45 years and above had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *academic advising*. These students also showed decreased satisfaction with the institution's *responsiveness to diverse populations*.

CLASS LEVEL

- Students enrolled one year or less showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction for *academic advising, admissions and financial aid, responsiveness to diverse populations*, and *safety and security*.
- Students enrolled two years or more indicated decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*, while those enrolled three years or more had increased expectations in this area.

CLASS LOAD

- Both full-time and part-time students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*.

- Full-time and part-time students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *admissions and financial aid* and *safety and security.*

CURRENT RESIDENCE

- Students in residence halls registered decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security,* while all other subgroups had increased expectations/increased satisfaction in this area.
- Students who live in residence halls or rent a room or apartment had decreased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- Students who own their house or live in parent's home had decreased satisfaction with *academic advising.*

DISABILITIES

- Students indicating no disabilities had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *academic advising,* while those with disabilities had decreased satisfaction in this area.
- Students in both groups (with/without disabilities) had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *admissions and financial aid* and *safety and security.*

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- Students seeking an associate's degree had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- Students with vocational/technical, certification, and self-improvement goals had decreased expectations/increased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Students in six of the seven subgroups had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *admissions and financial aid.*

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- Students who work full-time on campus exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction in three areas: *academic advising, admissions and financial aid,* and *safety and security.*

- Students who work on campus showed decreased satisfaction with the institution's *responsiveness to diverse populations.*
- Students working part-time on campus had decreased expectations for *safety and security.*
- Students working off campus indicated increased expectations/increased satisfaction in all areas.

ENROLLMENT STATUS

- Day students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising, admissions and financial aid, responsiveness to diverse populations,* and *safety and security.*
- Evening and weekend students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising.* These students also showed decreased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations.*
- Weekend students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security* and *admissions and financial aid.*

Community, Junior and Technical Colleges

ETHNICITY/ RACE

- African American students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *admissions and financial aid.*
- American Indian/Alaskan Native students showed decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Caucasian students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- Asian and Hispanic students indicated increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising, admissions and financial aid,* and *safety and security.*

GENDER

- Male and female students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- Both subgroups had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *admissions and financial aid, responsiveness to diverse populations* and *safety and security.*

GPA

- Three GPA subgroups indicated increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*: 1.99 or below, 2.5-2.99, and 3.5 or above.
- Students with no earned credits had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising*. These students exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security*.
- Students with a GPA of 1.99 or below and those with no credits showed decreased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations*.
- Students with a GPA of 2.0-2.49 and 3.0-3.49 experienced increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising, admissions and financial aid, responsiveness to diverse populations*, and *safety and security*.

INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE

- All subgroups (1st choice, 2nd choice, and 3rd choice or lower) showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising, admissions and financial aid*, and *safety and security*.

RESIDENCE CLASSIFICATION

- In-state students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*.
- Out-of-state students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security*.
- International students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *admissions and financial aid*.
- All subgroups had increased satisfaction with responsiveness to diverse populations.

Focused Patterns of Response for Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

Generalizations regarding the patterns of student responses by demographic subgroup are offered for the four areas of focus selected for this study: 1) *academic advising*, 2) *admissions and financial aid*, 3) *responsiveness to diverse populations*, and 4) *safety and security*. The information is presented in table format in Appendix E.

AGE

- The pattern of increased expectations/increased satisfaction was indicated for *recruitment and financial aid* among all age subgroups.
- There were increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security* in three of five age groups: 18 and under, 19-24, and 35-44.
- All age subgroups had decreased satisfaction with *safety and security*.
- For *academic advising*, there were increased expectations/decreased satisfaction among 35-44 year olds.
- For students age 45 and over, a pattern of decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction was indicated for *academic advising* and *safety and security*.
- All age subgroups showed decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*.

CLASS LEVEL

- There was decreased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations* for all class levels.
- Students in all class levels had increased expectations for *safety and security*. Only seniors exhibited increased satisfaction in this area.
- Freshmen had decreased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising*.
- Sophomores, juniors, and seniors had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising* and *recruitment and financial aid*.
- Graduate and professional students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*.

CLASS LOAD

- Full-time students showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid.*
- Full-time students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Part-time students experienced increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising* and *safety and security,* as well as increased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations.*

CURRENT RESIDENCE

- Students who live in residence halls had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Students who live in Greek housing showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising, recruitment and financial aid, responsiveness to diverse populations,* and *safety and security.*
- With the exception of students in residence halls, all subgroups showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising.*

DISABILITIES

- Students who reported disabilities indicated decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction in three areas: *academic advising, recruitment and financial aid;* and *safety and security.*
- Students who reported no disabilities had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *safety and security.*
- Students with and without disabilities expressed decreased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations.*

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- Students with degree aspirations had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid.*

- All student subgroups expressed decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations.*
- Individuals with goals of obtaining a bachelor's or master's degree or doing job training showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Students with goals of job training showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid* and *safety and security.*
- Students with goals of associate's degrees had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Individuals taking classes for self-improvement had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising, recruitment and financial aid,* and *safety and security.*

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- Students who work off campus had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Students who work full-time on campus had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising* and *safety and security.*
- Students who work full-time off campus had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising* and *safety and security.*
- Students who work part-time had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising* and *recruitment and financial aid.*
- All student subgroups registered decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations.*

ENROLLMENT STATUS

- Evening students exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with the following areas: *academic advising, recruitment and financial aid,* and *safety and security.*
- Weekend students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- All subgroups (day, evening, and weekend) had decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations.*

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ETHNICITY/ RACE

- Three subgroups had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security*: African Americans, Caucasians and Hispanics.
- African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic students had increased expectations/ increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid.*
- Only Asian students showed increased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations.*
- American Indians/Alaskan Natives had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- For *academic advising,* American Indians/Alaskan Natives had increased expectations/ decreased satisfaction; Caucasians and Hispanic students showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction in this area.

GENDER

- Male and female students exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- Males and females showed decreased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations.*
- Female students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- Both subgroups registered increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid.*

GPA

- Students with a GPA of 2.5-3.49 showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security*; the other subgroups had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction in this area.
- Students with a GPA of 1.99 or below showed decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising* and *safety and security.*

- Students with a GPA above 1.99 had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid.*
- Students with a GPA of 2.5 and higher showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- Only those students with a GPA of 2.0-2.49 had increased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations.*

INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE

- All subgroups (1st choice, 2nd choice, and 3rd choice or lower) had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- All subgroups (1st choice, 2nd choice, and 3rd choice or lower) experienced decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations.*
- All subgroups (1st choice, 2nd choice, and 3rd choice or lower) showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid.*
- Two subgroups (1st and 2nd choice) had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising,* while the 3rd choice or lower subgroup had decreased expectations/increased satisfaction in this area.

RESIDENCE CLASSIFICATION

- In-state and out-of-state students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *safety and security.*
- In-state and international students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising.*
- Out-of-state students had decreased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising* and *recruitment and financial aid.*
- International students had decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations,* while U.S. students experienced increased satisfaction in this area.

Focused Patterns of Response for Four-Year Private Colleges and Universities

Generalizations regarding the patterns of student responses by demographic subgroup are offered for the four areas of focus selected for this study: 1) *academic advising*, 2) *admissions and financial aid*, 3) *responsiveness to diverse populations*, and 4) *safety and security*. The information is presented in table format in Appendix F.

AGE

- Students 18 and under had increased expectations/increased satisfaction for *academic advising*, *recruitment and financial aid*, and *safety and security*.
- All age groups, except the 25-34 subgroup, showed increased expectations/ increased satisfaction with *safety and security*.
- Students age 35 and older had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.
- Students age 35-44 had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*.
- Students age 25-44 showed decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*, while the other age groups experienced increased satisfaction in this area.

CLASS LEVEL

- Freshmen had increased expectations/increased satisfaction for *academic advising*, *recruitment and financial aid*, and *safety and security*.
- Sophomores, juniors, and seniors had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *academic advising*.
- Seniors had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*, while freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and graduate/professional students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction in this area.

CLASS LOAD

- Part-time students exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.

- Part-time students showed decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*, while full-time students expressed increased satisfaction in this area.

- Full-time students expressed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid* and *safety and security*.

CURRENT RESIDENCE

- Students living on campus — in residence halls or Greek housing — showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising, recruitment and financial aid*, and *safety and security*.

- Students living in their own house or parent's home had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*. These subgroups also had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*.

- Only those students who live in their own house had decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*.

DISABILITIES

- Students who reported disabilities and no disabilities showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.

- Both subgroups had decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*.

- Both subgroups had increased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations* and *safety and security*.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

- Students aspiring for an associate's degree, doctoral or professional degree, certificate, or self-improvement, showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.

- Students who indicated an associate's or bachelor's degree or a certificate as their educational goal had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*. Non-degree-seeking students showed increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising*.

- Only those students seeking the associate's degree or a certificate had decreased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*; the other subgroups experienced increased satisfaction in this area.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- Students who work on campus had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *academic advising, recruitment and financial aid*, and *safety and security*.
- Students who work off campus showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.
- Students who work off campus showed decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*.
- Students who work off campus had decreased expectations/increased satisfaction with *safety and security*.

ENROLLMENT STATUS

- Evening students exhibited increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising, recruitment and financial aid*; and *safety and security*.
- Weekend students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*, and increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.
- Evening and weekend students had decreased satisfaction with *responsiveness to diverse populations*.
- Day students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid* and *safety and security*.

ETHNICITY/ RACE

- African American students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*; increased expectations/increased satisfaction were shown for *academic advising*, and *safety and security*.
- American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, and Caucasian students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid* and *safety and security*.

- Hispanic students had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*. This group showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.

- American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian students had decreased expectations/ increased satisfaction for *academic advising*.

- All ethnic/racial subgroups showed increased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*.

GENDER

- Male students showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*; female students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction in this area.

- Both subgroups had increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*, and *safety and security*.

GPA

- Students with a GPA of 2.0-2.99 showed increased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *academic advising*; those with a GPA of 3.0 and above had decreased expectations/ decreased satisfaction in this area.

- Only those students with a GPA of 2.0-2.49 had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*.

- Five of the six GPA subgroups registered increased expectations/increased satisfaction with *safety and security*; only students with a GPA of 3.5 and above had decreased expectations/increased satisfaction in this area.

- All student subgroups experienced increased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*.

INSTITUTIONAL CHOICE

- Students attending their 1st choice institution exhibited increased expectations/ increased satisfaction with *recruitment and financial aid*; 2nd and 3rd choice or lower had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction in this area.

- Students attending their 2nd choice institution had decreased expectations/ decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*; 3rd choice or lower had increased expectations/ decreased satisfaction in this area.

- Students at their 1st or 3rd choice institutions had increased expectations/ increased satisfaction with *safety and security*.

- All three subgroups (1st, 2nd, and 3rd choice or lower) had increased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*.

RESIDENCE CLASSIFICATION

- In-state students had decreased expectations/decreased satisfaction with *academic advising*; out-of-state and international students had increased expectations/increased satisfaction in this area.

- In-state students had increased expectations/decreased satisfaction for *recruitment and financial aid*, while out-of-state and international students had increased expectations/ increased satisfaction in this area.

- All three subgroups (in-state, out-of-state, and international) had increased satisfaction with institutional *responsiveness to diverse populations*.

Analysis of the Findings

aken as a whole, and generalizing from both quantitative and qualitative student feedback, certain findings can be inferred when juxtaposed against what's happening on campuses. In this study, institutional strengths are identified primarily as those areas where increased importance and increased satisfaction were indicated in the data. In some cases, positive consideration is given to areas where decreased importance occurs in concert with increased satisfaction. Institutional challenges are identified as those areas where increased expectations and decreased satisfaction were indicated. Individual areas where expectations decrease in concert with decreased satisfaction are examined as well.

Students want alternative campus experiences and career orientations that give them the edge in the job marketplace.

Two-year institutions are out-performing their four-year counterparts in meeting student expectations.

Community and technical colleges are low cost, close to home, and responsive to the diverse needs of their learners with respect to program alternatives and career orientation. These two-year schools continue to be intentional in their influence on the value students place on their college experience. As Alexander Astin's freshman-year survey data remind us time and time again, students want alternative campus experiences and career orientations that give them the edge in the job marketplace. Two-year colleges provide this career orientation and are rewarded by increased student satisfaction.

The average age of today's college student is rising, yet the average age of the student attending community, junior and technical colleges appears to be declining. In fact, many two-year institutions are reporting significant increases in their traditional-age population. This means that, for cost and career reasons, more students are using two-year schools to meet their educational needs.

Because the average debt load of students over the past four years has increased 3.7 percent per year, students are arriving on campus with higher expectations, insisting that the campus experience keep pace with their added investment and their anticipated debt burden. With their well-established tradition of meeting the needs of their students, two-year institutions are often better able to capitalize on these student expectations than are their four-year counterparts.

As students continue to raise the bar for their campus experiences, well-positioned colleges of the future will want to emulate the practices of the two-year sector and be ready, willing, and able to respond accordingly.

Four-year public and private colleges and universities exhibit performance that appears to be in a "holding pattern," neither proactive nor reactive.

Four-year private institutions continue to do what they've always done best — serve the traditional day student. However, their performance with evening and weekend students falls short. In fact, a preliminary look at the latest data suggest that four-year private colleges — typically the nation's most expensive — lost even more ground with these students in 1998-1999 — with more decreases in both expectations and satisfaction.

Four-year public institutions, on the other hand, receive importance and satisfaction ratings that are mediocre at best. For the day, evening and weekend students, there are glimmers of excellence scattered among students across demographic characteristics. However, the ratings for responsiveness to diversity represent pockets of challenge across day, evening, and weekend enrollments, as well as for students embodying many other demographic characteristics such as age and class level, where all subgroups register negative perceptions to diversity efforts.

The four-year institutions, public and private, must confront the challenges they are facing from their two-year counterparts head-on if they are to emerge as future competitors in an increasingly diverse and competitive marketplace characterized by (1) adult students who insist on alternative approaches to their education, and (2) traditional students facing rather unwieldy debt loads.

While it is true that four-year privates continue to exceed their counterparts in the level of student satisfaction (i.e., the size of their satisfaction scores), the students they are attracting are bringing higher and higher expectations with them to campus. As prices increase and as institutions struggle with their own financial challenges, students may be creating unrealistic expectations for the institution and for the faculty who serve these students with diverse needs. The irony is that the things many private colleges and universities are doing to survive (e.g., admitting students who don't fit their profile of strength) may result in their downfall.

For all students — despite institutional type — there is a decided concern about the quality of academic advising offered.

Quality academic advising has surfaced as one of the most predominant needs identified across all institutional types, as well as among students across numerous demographic characteristics. The importance cannot be overemphasized — students are adamant — they want, need, and expect the faculty to provide some level of meaningful advising support to them as they begin to make important academic decisions. Remember that students do not enter the institution knowing how to make these decisions.

Data from hundreds of institutions over the past four years are conclusive — generally, students prefer faculty advisors over professional advisors. In fact, the data reveal lower expectations for professional advisors than for faculty advisors. One message is clear — better academic advising is a trademark of the most successful institutions. As campuses confront competing demands for faculty time, the expectations of students regarding advising must not be ignored.

The things many private colleges and universities are doing to survive may result in their downfall.

Institutional responsiveness to diverse populations varies widely among institutions and by demographic characteristics of the students.

The *responsiveness to diverse populations* scale provides a comprehensive overview of student perceptions of the institution's response to the needs of students with disabilities, older students, returning learners, commuters, part-time and evening students, as well as racially and ethnically under-represented students. The four-year assessments indicate that the satisfaction levels across all demographic characteristics are higher at the community, junior, and technical colleges than at the four-year institutions. Decreases in

Challenges emerge when there is not a good match between who institutions say they are and what they deliver.

student satisfaction are more pronounced at four-year public institutions than at four-year privates. What these differences may mean is that students expect local, tax-supported, public institutions to provide easy access to all programs and services. We know that two-year public institutions are expert at marketing access, thus raising the bar for four-year public institutions. Thus four-year public institutions find themselves competing with easy access messages from two-year institutions and with very appealing limited access messages from their more selective four-year private counterparts. Four-year public institutions are forced to find their niche somewhere between the two positions — access and selectivity. Challenges emerge when program and service delivery do not approximate student expectations (i.e., there is not a good match between who institutions say they are and what they deliver).

For all students, basic personal needs — like safety and security — predominate, often offsetting concern about more-academic and institutional issues.

Concern for safety and security should not be a surprise to institutions; Maslow's hierarchy of personal need is in effect whenever and wherever students are present. In other words, students do not relinquish their basic personal needs at the doors of the institutions they enter. Campus crime is real. Physical safety is a valid concern in any community. The data speak loudly to the issue of safety and security. Attention to campus lighting, for example, is a much more pressing issue than the amount of parking the campus can offer. In addition, students across the nation are telling institutions that years of deferred maintenance on residence halls come back to haunt them, especially when this neglect renders environments that are not conducive to learning.

In some instances, there appear to be a mismatch between student and institutional values.

This apparent mismatch shows up in a number of ways that relate to the purposes of institutions. Students are coming to campus with expectations that are not commensurate with the mission of the institution. In fact, the expectations run contrary to the tradition of the academy. If students seek careers, but colleges offer "advanced esoterics", dissonance occurs. It is unlikely that this mismatch in values will dissipate in the existing environments where the buildings, the organizational structure, the curriculum, and the operating systems were designed for students who exist in much smaller numbers today. The declining levels of satisfaction of evening and weekend students with the four-year academies is very telling. Such institutions are recruiting them, but the institutions are not meeting their expectations once they enroll.

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For all institutions and institutional types, there are pockets of excellence and pockets of opportunity that colleges and universities need to examine.

The data suggest that expectations and satisfaction are on the upswing with the traditional-age student across all institutional types, but the community, junior and technical colleges are the only ones performing well with both adult and traditional-age students. Within the adult population (ages 25 and above) the four-year publics are gaining ground within the 25-34 year old subgroup, but they're losing ground with students more than 35 years of age. The four-year privates, on the other hand, are showing decreases in expectations and levels of satisfaction across the board. This finding suggests that institutions of all types should be using each other's successes to inform their plans for increasing both expectations and levels of satisfaction.

Conclusions and Recommendations

uccessful institutions share three basic attributes: they focus on the needs of their students; they continually improve the quality of the educational experience, and they use student satisfaction data to shape their future directions.

Higher education is in a constant state of change — and so are its students. The data in this study suggest that students are more than demographics. They have multiple needs that require informed and meaningful institutional responses. And institutions must recognize that student needs today cannot be met with yesterday's responses. The data are clear: current solutions are not working equally well with all student groups.

Higher education is in a constant state of change – and so are its students.

Reasons behind these findings are intertwined with academic and physical realities that challenge even the best institutions. Institutions cannot ignore the disparities that exist between age groups, particularly those 25 and older. For example, adding evening and weekend programs without adequate support services will continue to impact institutions that do not consider the specific needs of students who enroll in these programs.

Finally, the reader should remember that the data in this study are aggregate and any interpretations should be considered in this context. While the conclusions are significant and important, institutions must perform their own analyses to understand how relative these trends are to them.